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It is a pleasure to announce that the fellowships of the Center, made possible by the generous grant of the Bollingen Foundation, have been awarded for the season of 1958-1959 to Dr. John Alden Williams and Dr. Helen J. Wall.

In view of the excellent work done by Dr. Williams during the present season, his fellowship has been renewed, since he wishes to remain in the Near East for another year, in preparation for a post as Assistant Professor in the Institute for Islamic Studies at McGill University, Montreal, where he will assume his duties in the Autumn of 1959, to teach Islamic cultural history and history of art and archaeology. Mr. Williams will travel during the summer in North Africa and will visit Iran, India, and Pakistan before his return to the United States.

Dr. Wall is an extremely able Egyptologist, chiefly interested in the early history of Egypt. She received her doctor's degree at the University of Paris, and a revised and expanded version of her thesis - a comparative study of the names of the funerary estates of the Old Kingdom - is shortly to be published by the French Institute. Dr. Wall, who has spent much time in Egypt and knows the country thoroughly, has made contributions to the Newsletters, including the present one.

The Center has been most fortunate in securing the consent of Mr. John Goelet to act as Director in Cairo during the coming season. Mr. Goelet is a Trustee of the Center and an able scholar in the field of Islamic art. He has spent much time in Egypt and has a good command of Arabic.

Archaeological Work in Egypt

Interesting reports have been received from the representatives of the Center in Egypt, Mr. Wente and Dr. Williams, as well as from Dr. Helen Wall, who (as mentioned above) has been awarded the Egyptological fellowship offered by the Center for 1958-1959. Other items of news have been gleaned from the American and Egyptian press.

One of these, which appeared in newspapers in the United States as a communication from Kamal el-Mallakh, whose name is known in connection with the discovery of the boat near the pyramid of Cheops, speaks of the discovery of a cemetery of mummified ostriches at Matarieh in the vicinity of Heliopolis, that very ancient city near Cairo of whose former grandeur so little remains. Mr. Wente writes that he has been unable to see the material found there but that from what he has learned only a few ostriches were found, so that the necropolis could hardly be called an "ostrich cemetery" in the sense that Tuna el-Gebel, where tens of thousands of ibises were buried, is called an "ibis cemetery". Moreover, since toward the end of the last century some Germans attempted to raise ostriches on the site of the





discovery, he feels that judgement must be reserved until the material from the excavation has been made accessible. A more interesting and significant discovery made at this site is a tomb of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, evidently plundered in 1894, according to a date in Arabic left on the walls. A shaft five meters deep leads to two passages and a burial chamber, in the vaulted roof of which are scenes of the voyages made by the deceased in the after-world.

A second newspaper item, from the Progrès Egyptien, Cairo, April 6, tells that a "mission of American and Egyptian Egyptologists" has discovered at Luxor a number of sarcophagi containing mummies of the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasties. Though this must refer to the excavation in which the Oriental Institute, the only American Institution now at work in Egypt, has a part, no further information is available.

In a letter of April 9, Mr. Wente writes that the Polish excavation at Athribis (Benha) is nearing the end of its season. This excavation, in the charge of Professor Michalowski, is part of the cultural exchange program of the past two years between Egypt and Poland. It has uncovered brick remains of the end of the Ptolemaic and the beginning of the Roman period and limestone statuettes of the same age. About two hundred limestone blocks with Corinthian capitals, perhaps belonging to a first-century temple, await assembling. Very important are two furnaces of cylindrical shape of the second to the fourth century, which were used for the making of glass. Since these are unique, they will possibly be transported to the Coptic Museum in Cairo. The expedition plans to return to the site next year in the hope of finding earlier remains.

Dr. Wiercinski, who (as will be remembered from former Newsletters) has been making anthropological studies under the Polish-Egyptian cultural exchange program, has discovered three fossilized skulls of very primitive nature mixed in with the material from the pre-historic site of Maadi, near Cairo. Actually, they do not belong to the excavated material, but were turned up, presumably from the wadi near Maadi, by the British Army during the recent war. These skulls are of huge size and extremely thick: the teeth, for example, are three times the size of those of a normal adult. Their general features resemble those of Neanderthal man. There is no doubt that they are not the result of pathological disorders but are certainly primitive and possibly paleolithic. It is hoped that a Carbon-14 test may be made to determine their age more exactly. For the anthropological study of Egypt, they are of the utmost significance, since apparently no human remains earlier than the neolithic have been previously discovered in Egypt.

Mr. Wente writes that Dr. Wiercinski has also noted a strange change in the racial composition of the aristocracy of the Sixth Dynasty. Material from Giza, Saqqara, and Gebelein reveals a strong increase in what Dr. Wiercinski calls Nordic and Mongolitic racial characteristics. Such a marked alteration may indicate the influx of new racial types from outside Egypt, or inbreeding, or natural selection. To determine the cause demands the combined work of anthropologists and Egyptologists, for the latter may be able to adduce evidence from texts relating to genealogies. Dr. Wiercinski believes, however, that the high percentage of Armenoid characteristics among the Sixth Dynasty nobility is probably due to inbreeding, which may cause abnormal persistence of genetic types that would otherwise show a lower percentage of distribution.

In a letter of April 24, Mr. Wente writes that, to judge from the local press, relations between Egypt and the United States seem to have become less strained, a fact that is reflected in the attitude of Egyptian scholars toward American



institutions. His letter continues: "Around the middle of April a cultural agreement was made between the United Arab Republic and Soviet Russia. This agreement provides, among other things, that three advisors from Russia will be invited to spend October, November, and December in Egypt to discuss problems relating to antiquities. Egypt will furnish the Soviet Union with 'complete documentation' on the ancient Egyptian culture and on the literature and history of the Arabs.

"Dr. Klasens of the State Museum of Antiquities at Leyden has just finished the season's work at Abu Roash (see Newsletter No. 24). This season, burial chambers of a small Fourth Dynasty mastaba were discovered unlooted. Bits of gold from the badly decayed burials and numerous stone vessels were found. As will be remembered, this excavation has mainly been concerned with an earlier cemetery, which may be ascribed to the period of transition between the late predynastic and the First Dynasty. Aside from a fragment inscribed with the name of Hor-Aha, pottery with painted red dots has been found in the burials.

"Among the smaller projects of the season is an architectural survey made by the Swiss Institute of the temple of Nectanebo on the island of Elephantine. A large number of blocks reused in this temple derive from structures of the Eighteenth Dynasty, some of them from as far back as the period of Hatshepsut. It might indeed be possible to reconstruct portions of the earlier temple from the blocks reused in the structure of the Thirtieth Dynasty. Professor Edel and Dr. Holscher have also been working in the tombs on the west side of the river in the vicinity of Assuan."

A Journey by Landrover to Upper Egypt, by Helen J. Wall

During the month of March I had the opportunity of making a trip by car, together with Jean Jacquet, architect of the Centre de Documentation, from Cairo to Luxor and back. Our purpose was to visit sites on the way which are difficult of access by train. The trip was delightful, with a minimum of those small contre-temps which can so easily spoil the pleasure of an expedition.

We left Cairo on the morning of the 8th, arriving at Minya at about 2:30 P.M. The road is excellent on this stretch, with the exception of a small bit between Beni Suef and El Fashn. In passing, we noticed that the new bridge across the Nile at Helwan is almost completed. A newly paved road running near the pyramids of Dahshur connects the bridge with the desert road to the Fayum.

At Minya, we paid a visit to the Inspector of the Department of Antiquities for Middle Egypt, Mr. Rasouli, who received us very hospitably with cakes and coca cola and agreed to arrange for our trip to the tombs of Benihasan the following morning. The rest of the afternoon we spent in the Municipal Museum, which boasts a small number of antiquities (coffins from Assiut, late sphinxes from Alexandria, some prehistoric pottery, and a few stelae of the First Intermediate Period or early Middle Kingdom from the neighborhood) and towards evening sauntered down the "corniche" (now under construction) admiring the mountains on the opposite side of the river lit up with a salmon-colored glow by the setting sun.

Promptly at 8:30 we met the chief Ghafir who had arranged for a felucca to take us across the river near the town of Abu Qurqas. The wind was favorable and our crossing quickly accomplished. The tombs of Benihasan are among the most interesting in Egypt, historically, artistically, and architecturally. Some years back an attempt was made to protect the painted walls by covering them with a thin coat



of paraffin. This has had the unfortunate result of collecting a layer of dust, which now almost completely obscures the colors. However, the Department of Antiquities' chemical expert, Dr. Zaki Iskander, has recently made some very successful trials at cleaning parts of the paintings, and we were glad to hear that it is in the program of the Department to start cleaning all the tombs in near future.

The morning of the following day was devoted to the ruins of Ashmunein and Tuna el-Gebel, where we lunched with Dr. Werner Kaiser, Egyptologist from Munich, and Dr. Butzer, a young Canadian geologist, who have been spending a couple of months surveying the deserts on both sides of the Nile for prehistoric sites.

The good paved road which last year ended at Assiut has now been continued down as far as Sohag, so that it is no longer necessary to make the long detour by the east bank via Akhmim. The new road cuts the distance between the two cities by sixteen kilometers. However, at Sohag comfortable driving ends, and the bumpy dirt road to Girga and Nag Hamadi remains unchanged.

We spent a day and a half at Abydos where extensive restorations are being carried out, as mentioned by Mr. Wentz in Newsletter No. 27. Friends of Mrs. Edy will be glad to hear that she is well and happily settled with her cat in a modest dwelling in the village of Araba el-Madfuna. She is working in the temple of Seti I for the Department of Antiquities.

Arrived at Luxor, we rested for a few days in the quiet and calm of Chicago House. During that time we made an excursion to Esna with Chief Inspector Labib Habashi to see the results of the clearing operations being carried on under his supervision behind the temple. He is now negotiating the purchase of one or two of the houses along the edge of the mound so that digging can proceed where they stand. Another outing, also in company with Labib, was an overnight visit to the mission run by the Jesuit Fathers at Garagos near Qus. They have instituted classes in pottery making for the children of the village, have constructed wheels for turning the pots and a kiln for firing, and have imported a young Swiss ceramist to organize the work and supervise the students. They intend also to start classes in weaving similar to what is being done by Ramses Wissawassef near Giza. During our stay we visited native potters and weavers still pursuing their ancient crafts in the neighborhood.

On Sunday the 23rd we were off again via the bridge at Esna to Qurna to stay for a few days at the Hotel of Sheikh Ali abd el-Rasoul. On the way we stopped to see the interesting Ptolemaic temple of Tod, not much frequented by visitors, because of its out-of-the-way location, but definitely worth seeing.

At Sheikh Ali's we found Dr. Otto of Heidelberg, Dr. Spiegel of Göttingen, and Dr. Helck of Hamburg, who accompanied us on an afternoon's excursion to Gebelein. The site is interesting scenically but remains are limited to portions of mud-brick walls, presumably part of the late temple of Hathor. Another day was spent at Dendera, where we were amazed to find that the pall of wasps which used to hang over the temple and was such a plague to visitors has entirely disappeared. Thanks to Inspector Habashi, they have been completely cleared out and the outside faces of the temple cleaned of their disfiguring mud nests, which were beginning to hide the reliefs. The screens which covered the ceiling of the hypostyle hall to protect it from bats have also been removed so that the beautifully preserved astronomical inscriptions are now clearly visible. New screens fitted between the outer columns of the hall protect the temple more efficiently.



When the time came to start back toward Cairo, we wished to avoid making the trip via Esna again and therefore decided to try driving straight north from Qurna and, if necessary, to go across the desert between Dendera and Nag Hamadi. To our inquiries about the roads we received very divergent replies. The most positive was that of the Ghafir at Dendera, who affirmed that a new paved road to Nag Hamadi started about four kilometers beyond Dendera in the desert. To make sure that we didn't miss it, we took him with us, starting out on a track which goes off to the right just in front of the temple. The desert in that region is rather stoney but otherwise negotiable for a car with a four-wheel drive. You have to stay at some distance from the cultivation, as gravel has been taken out along the desert edge, leaving a pitted surface impossible to traverse. At about fourteen kilometers north of the temple, we finally hit a tarred road, and our guide triumphantly left us to find his way back as best he could on donkeyback. We were just congratulating ourselves on the prospect of a quick run through to Nag Hamadi when our nice tarred road stopped as abruptly as it had started (after about eight kilometers) and we were forced to zigzag our way along the "agricultural roads" through the valley until we reached the river about opposite Dishna. From there on the road follows the bank through innumerable villages up to Nag Hamadi. It was about the worst road we had encountered, so far as bumps were concerned, but otherwise quite feasible.

Our intention was to stay at the rest house at Abydos. However, we were disappointed in this as, despite the fact that we had a letter from Inspector Ibrahim Kamal of Sohag (formerly at Qurna) giving us permission to stay there, we were told locally that the rest house was closed indefinitely. We had perforce to stay in Balyana where the choice of hotels is not great: George's Hotel seems to be the lesser of two evils. Next morning was spent at the White Monastery of Apa Shenuda west of Sohag. It is easy of access, and the Coptic families who inhabit the enclosure are friendly. The buildings are fascinating, both for their architectural style -- early Christian with elements copied from Pharaonic structures -- and for the numerous ancient blocks with well-preserved bas-reliefs and inscriptions which were reused in its construction.

After lunch, accompanied by the Chief Ghafir from Sohag, we abandoned the new paved road to Assiut for the dirt road on the eastern bank, in order to visit the tombs of Hamamiyeh, where I had an inscription to check. The tombs lie just in back of the village of that name, not far from the road, and are in a comparatively good state of preservation, though covered inside with soot.

The night was spent at the Windsor Hotel in Assiut -- quite comfortable, though somewhat noisy -- and first thing in the morning we went out to see the tombs which lie just southwest of the city. To our disappointment the most important tomb, that of Hapidjefai, has been requisitioned by the army to be used as a storage depot and is closed to visitors. The afternoon was devoted to the tombs of Meir. These latter cede only to Benihasan in interest and beauty, and the site itself also is magnificent. Finding the way out there, however, requires ingenuity and patience. After leaving the main road at the village of Nazali Ganub, you traverse Qusiya and then become engaged upon a maze of dikes which eventually lead to the village of Meir. There you can pick up a Ghafir who leads you back along another maze into the desert and to the foot of the hills where the tombs are. The whole distance is about thirty kilometers.

Having spent another night at Minya, we arrived safely the following day in Cairo rather the worse for wear, but very pleased with our trip and looking forward above all to a good bath!



Cairo, April 10, 1958

Islamic Egypt

It has recently been reported that the Islamic Section of the Department of Antiquities will undertake some important work of repair and restoration in the Cairo area during the coming season. This is said to include:

- 1) The repair of the Great Aqueduct of Cairo. This aqueduct, formerly attributed to Saladin, but actually built by the Sultan el-Ghuri in the sixteenth century, supplied water to Cairo until comparatively recent times.
- 2) Restoration of the Madrasa-Mausoleum of the Amir Qurqumas (the "Amir Kabir"), a son of the Mameluke Sultan Bars Bey (1422-1438).
- 3) Repair and restoration of the northeast wall of the city (Burg al-Zafar).
- 4) Restoration of the Maristan of al-Muayyad (1412-1421).

In a letter of April 28, Mr. Williams says that an inspector of the Department of Antiquities has left for Assuan to study the interesting series of Islamic domed tombs in that region. "It is to be hoped," he adds, "that we can look forward to some sort of publication on this little-studied and very interesting mediaeval necropolis, about which so little has been published. It is usually supposed that it contains the remains of wealthy pilgrims, who died en-route to Mecca, when the Hajj road lay through the Nile Valley as far as Assuan and then turned to the Red Sea, where the pilgrims embarked for the Hijaz."

Although most of the local members of the Center were out of town for the long week-ends of the Islamic festivals, Sham-al-Nasim and Bairam Ramadan, and Sunday tours had to be cancelled, the tours were resumed at the end of April to the Fatimid monuments near the North Gates: the Mosque of al-Hakim, the Bab al-Nasr, the Bab al-Futuh, the fortifications, and the interesting little Mosque of al-Aqmar. The weather is growing hot, but a loyal few of the Cairo members still wish to continue the tours conducted by the Center's Fellows. Early in May, under Mr. Williams' guidance, they visited the Citadel to view the curtain walls of Saladin, the fine Mameluke Mosque of Sultan Nasir Muhammed ibn Qalawun and, incidentally, the baroque Mosque-Sepulchre of Muhammad Ali, which so dominates the Cairo skyline. Afterwards, they visited the superb Madrasa-Mosque-Tomb of Sultan Hasan, son of Nasir Muhammad, built in 1356-63, and considered by some to be the finest monument of the Islamic period in Egypt. Though Mr. Williams has proceeded chronologically in these group-studies of Islamic monuments, some of the members have requested a revisit of earlier edifices, such as the Mosque of Ibn Tulun.

Among books that have come to Mr. Williams' attention is Professor Creswell's Penguin book on Islamic Architecture, just published. "It is a very useful survey of all this great scholar's previous work and will prove to be of great use as a text for undergraduate students and as an introductory work for educated laymen."

Other recent publications are a new critical edition of the Diwan of 'Imru-al-Qays, edited by abu-Fadl Ibrahim and published by Dar al-Ma'arif, Cairo, and Bayan al-Farq bayn al-Sadr wa-l-Qalb wa-l-Fu'ad wa-l-Lubb, by al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (ed. by Nicholas Heer), published by Aissa Halabi Press. This last is a treatise on mystical psychology by an important and enigmatic figure in 3rd (i.e. 9th) century Khurasani Sufism.



In March, a member of the Center, Dr. Myron Bement Smith, en route to the United States from Lahore, gave two lectures at the University of Cairo, one on "Islamic Architecture and the West," which dealt with the question of cultural transmission and was directed to dispelling some popular misconceptions concerning the origin of the Gothic arch, the role of the Crusades, and the Muslim occupation of Spain. The text of this lecture, which was also delivered at the colloquium at Lahore, will be published in The Middle East Forum, the alumni magazine of the American University at Beirut. The second lecture, "Islamic Art as Cultural Expression," dealt with the question of what provision, if any, was made in early Islam for aesthetic activities: it was suggested that the great building activity of the early Islamic rulers was perhaps more an expression of the great wealth at their disposal and consequent taste for luxury than of Islam as conceived of by the Prophet and his immediate followers. Dr. Smith gave two additional lectures at the School of Oriental Studies of the American University.

#### Archaeological Work in the Sudan

We are indebted to Dr. William Kelly Simpson, a member of the Center, for the following report on recent work in the Sudan, furnished to him by the Commissioner for Archaeology, Jean Vercoutter:

In September 1957 a sphinx of Aspalta was discovered at Defeiya, a hamlet northeast of Khartoum. Excavation of the site was begun in February 1958 under the direction of Dr. Vercoutter.

The expedition of the University of Pisa at Soleb (see Newsletter No. 26) uncovered a hypostyle hall of Amenhotep III with additions of Amenhotep IV and of the Meroitic period. It also excavated fifteen graves in the form of pyramids dating from the Eighteenth Dynasty in the cemetery west of the temple. A preliminary report of this work will be published in Kush VI.

Professor Emery's expedition at Buhen consisted this year chiefly of trial diggings on the outside New Kingdom defensive wall and the inside Middle Kingdom girdle wall. A report of these will appear in Kush VII. The work will be continued in October 1958.

In December 1957 a mission from the Humboldt University, Berlin, headed by Professor Fritz Hintze, Director of the German Archaeological Institute, arrived in Khartoum to make a survey of the Butana desert between the main Nile, the River Atbara and the road Khartoum-Kassala in search of Meroitic remains and inscriptions.

Preliminary plans have been drawn for a new museum at Khartoum to house the archaeological and ethnographical collections as well as the laboratories, the Flinders Petrie library, and the offices of the Antiquities Service.

#### Early Christian Art

Mr. Williams writes under the date of May 6, that a joint expedition of the University of Michigan and Princeton has passed through Cairo on its way to Sinai to continue the recording of the ancient monastery of St. Catharine. It will be remembered that the manuscripts were reproduced photographically some years ago. The present expedition proposes to round out the work at the monastery by making a record of the architecture and the icons, many of which are said to date from before the Iconoclastic heresy and thus have singular importance for the study of Byzantine painting and iconography. Included in the expedition are Professor George Forsyth, Jr., head of the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Michigan, Professor Kurt Weitzmann of Princeton University, and Mr. Fred Anderegg, also of the University of Michigan, the photographer for the project.



### The Coptic Museum

The Director of the Museum, Dr. Pahor Labib, reports to Mr. Williams that, in furtherance of the aim to make the Museum an international study center, research rooms and a lecture hall have been added to the present building. Though the activities of the Museum during the past year have not included excavation, a crew has been maintained to continue restoration at Abu-Mina, the great Early Christian pilgrimage center in the Western Desert between Burg al-Arab and al-Alamein. A standing project of excavation and restoration continues on the site of the Roman fortress Babylon, some of the most important areas of which are right in the Museum garden. Dr. Labib reports that a number of small objects have been found. It has also been ascertained that a western Nile harbor existed between the two great bastions of the fortress and was similar to the South Harbor, which is exposed. Like the latter, the Western harbor lies nearly six meters below the present level.

The Museum continues with publication of each division of its collection, following on the general catalogue compiled by Dr. Labib in 1956. Two volumes, one of the stone work, by Dr. Labib and a second on the textiles, by Mme. Su'ad Maher and Hishmet Messiha, have already appeared. A third volume, on ivories and ikons, is expected to appear at the end of the year.



Publications by Members of the Center

Aldred, Cyril, "The End of the El-'Amarna Period," in The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, 43, 1957, p. 30-41. This article attempts to untangle some of the complicated family relationships of the house of Akhenaten, which are important for their bearing on the social and political history of the age.

Miles, George C. "The Early Islamic Bronze Coinage of Egypt," in Centennial Volume of the American Numismatic Society, New York, 1958, p. 471-502. This article puts in order the bronze and copper coinage of the Umayyad and early 'Abbasid periods attributable to Egyptian mints. Apparently Islamic coinage first appeared in Egypt only about 75 A.H., or even later, when it first occurs without either mint or date. In the interim between the Moslem conquest of Egypt and the coinage reform of Abd al-Malik, presumably the Arabs continued to strike bronze coins of Heraclius (and perhaps Constans II) at the Alexandrian mint. There were apparently no transitional coins as in Palestine and Syria.

----- "Early Islamic Tombstones from Egypt in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston," in Ars Orientalis II, 1957, p. 215-226; plates. This article describes fourteen stones of the ninth century which present "valuable dated evidence" for the "study of the development of ornamental Arabic epigraphy in Egypt." It gives translation of the texts.

----- "Catalogue of Islamic Coins from the Excavation at Herodian Jericho, 1951," in The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 32-33, 1952-54, p. 29-41. The coins found here are chiefly Umayyad, a few 'Abbasid, and a negligible number from later periods. Coins of Egyptian mintage were not uncommon in Jericho.

Smith, William Stevenson, The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt (Pelican History of Art) Penguin Books, Baltimore, Maryland, 1958. This book by a Trustee of the Center and a Director in Egypt in 1951-1952, at which time, much of the preparatory work for the publication was done, will prove to be an indispensable introduction to the subject for the student and intelligent layman.

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The Secretary is dependent for information on offprints and communications sent to her by the members. Please address Mrs. Elizabeth Riefstahl, Executive Secretary, Postoffice Box 27, South Essex, Massachusetts.